



Take Note: A Home Inventory Saves Time and Worry

No one expects to lose furniture or other belongings in a fire, a burglary or a storm, but if disaster strikes your home, would you be able to report exactly what you lost?

Remembering every single detail about your possessions is a gargantuan task. By keeping an up-to-date home inventory, you can get through the clean up and paperwork stage of a disaster quickly and accurately. According to the Insurance Information Institute, a home inventory can:

- determine the value of your belongings and your personal insurance needs
- identify exactly what was lost since most people cannot recall items accumulated gradually
- establish the purchase dates and prices of major items in case of a loss
- settle your home owner's insurance claim quickly and efficiently
- verify losses for income tax deductions.

To create your home inventory, start with a looseleaf notebook that you can modify as your possessions change. Use looseleaf paper for your lists and plastic protector sheets to hold receipts, fabric samples and photographs.

For the inventory itself, go through each room and list all its contents. If you prefer, walk through each room with a microcassette recorder and describe each item in the room. You can transcribe the information later. Be sure to note each item ranging from carpets and rugs to furniture to books, clocks and lamps. Don't forget to open the closets and cupboards and list all the items inside them. On your list, note the item's name, a short description, the purchase date and the purchase price.

If the items have serial numbers, list those, too. Back up your written inventory with photographs of each wall of each room with closet or cabinet doors open. On the back of each picture, write the date, the general location and the contents shown. You also may want to make a videotape of your possessions.

In your notebook, organize your lists by room. Attach receipts and photos to the list or put them in a plastic protector behind the list. Once you have compiled all your information, the inventory, photographs and video should be kept in a fire-safe place away from your home such as a safe-deposit box at your bank, but be sure to keep a copy in your home so you can update it as needed.

If you do ever have to file a home owner's claim, you will have a comprehensive packet of information available quickly, and you can be on your way to replacing the items that make your house a happy and comfortable home for you and your family.

For more information, contact one of the many insurance agents who are members of Valley Home Builders Association – a complete directory is available online at www.vhba.com.